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SYDNEY AT SUNSET

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# Sydney at Sunset

and

Other Verses

Ruth M. Bedford



Australasian Authors' Agency  
Melbourne



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1911.

SYDNEY AT SUNSET

AND

OTHER VERSES



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BY  
RUTH M. BEDFORD



Melbourne  
AUSTRALASIAN AUTHORS' AGENCY  
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## Acknowledgment

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## Sydney at Sunset

Nightly the gradual pageant is unroll'd  
    Before my wondering eyes,  
The pure vermilion, the rose and gold  
    And pearl of sunset skies.

Here, from my window, through these magic hours  
    I gaze across the bay  
Where Sydney lifts to heaven all her towers,  
    Dark at the death of day.

Sydney, my Sydney! All thy domes and spires  
    Stand clear against the west,  
And lights spring out, to kindle little fires  
    Of love within my breast.

Now through the gardens, blurred as if with rain,  
    The Dusk goes by unseen,  
And, passing, draws her mantle once again  
    Across the gold and green.

SYDNEY AT SUNSET

It hides the slopes where sunlight lingered last,  
It overspreads the trees,  
Finding and folding all the beauty fast  
By slow and soft degrees.

No more the western heaven gleams and glows ;  
The gold turns grey. A star  
Breaks through the darkness. Dim the shore-line  
grows,  
And dim the waters are.

But there beyond the water lies the town,  
Her windows jewel-bright,  
Sydney, on whom both sun and stars look down  
With so much love and light.

## Keep Me Away from Love

Keep me away from love, Mary my Mother,  
Keep me away, apart,  
That no one man has power more than another  
Subtly to stir the depths of my sleeping heart,  
Subtly to stir my pulse to a beat uneven.  
*Keep me away from love,*  
*Mother of Heaven!*  
*Keep me away from love!*

There is a man whose name, even in praying,  
I have no right to bless.  
(Pity me, pity me, Mother! What am I saying?  
How shall I steel my heart in its feebleness?)  
Lo, I can fight no more; I have prayed and striven.  
*Keep me away from love!*  
*Mother of Heaven!*  
*Keep me away from love!*

Never a word of mine or a smile has moved him,  
(See, I have slain my pride!)  
Am I to blame in knowing I could have loved him  
Had he desired this love which I strive to hide?

KEEP ME AWAY FROM LOVE

Which I would hide, forsake, nay, would even  
smother.

*Keep me away from love.*

*Mary my Mother!*

*Keep me away from love!*

Love is so cruel a thing when it comes so vainly,  
And I can bear no more;

Love is too fierce to be governed and guided sanely,  
Knowing no rules or bounds but its own wild  
lore.

How shall I face the nights and the long  
to-morrows?

*Keep me away from love!*

*Mother of Sorrows,*

*Keep me away from love!*

Never shall helpless hands cling trustfully to me,  
I must remain alone,

Never to feel the wonderful thought thrill through  
me,

Breaking in rapture, "This is my child—my  
own!"

(Why is so weak a heart to a woman given?)

KEEP ME AWAY FROM LOVE

*Keep me away from love,  
Mother of Heaven!  
Keep me away from love!*

I have grown starved and weary with endless giving,  
God will perhaps repay.  
I would live calmly now—if one calls it living—  
Nothing shall break the calm of my lonely way;  
Cold and remote as the moon which o'ershines the  
city.  
*Keep me away from love!  
Mother of Pity,  
Keep me away from love!*

## The Morning of the World

It was the morning of the world  
Which gods and men have sung;  
Joy's waving flags were all unfurl'd  
And you and I were young.

We stood on mist-encircled hills  
And faced the growing light,  
That moment when the dawn fulfils  
The promise of the night.

Up came the sun! The hills' sharp rim  
Was like a purple cup;  
The East grew bright beyond its brim,  
And so the sun came up.

The birds awoke; the flowers uncurl'd;  
We gloried in the day.  
It was the morning of the world,  
With all the earth at play.



THE MORNING OF THE WORLD

The glad, up-welling songs of birds  
Were not more light and free  
Than our light hearts and our gay words,  
So young and blithe were we.

The opening buds were all a-glow,  
We walked among the flowers,  
Poor blossoms that could never know  
Such joy of life as ours.

We stood and laughed in sheer delight,  
We ran, with flying feet,  
And sun and rain, and day and night,  
And all life held was sweet.

We journeyed hand in hand with Truth  
And thought we knew her well;  
Ours was the peerless hope of youth,  
No fear could ever quell.

And we were wise as none before  
Were wise since Time began;  
And we were strong with something more  
Than all the strength of man.

THE MORNING OF THE WORLD

We saw earth's far-off cities raise  
Their minarets and towers  
Clear through the golden morning haze,  
And knew them all for ours.

So, fearless, with our hearts aflame,  
Untouched by doubt or age,  
Hot-foot, with singing lips we came  
To take our heritage.

Joy's waving banners, all unfurl'd,  
Above our pathway hung;  
It was the morning of the world  
And you and I were young.

## Song

Who came and filled my heart with Spring,  
And brought the roses too,  
And smiled upon their blossoming?  
'Twas you, my dear, 'twas you!

Who plucked the roses at her ease  
And left me only rue  
And these unfading memories?  
'Twas you, my dear, 'twas you!

## Death and the Soldier

Far away, on a battlefield,  
A wounded soldier lay ;  
Helmet and sword were cast aside,  
For he lay low in his youth and pride,  
The fiat was issued, his fate was sealed,  
And he was to die—to die.

Forth from his lips went a bitter cry,  
“Grim Death, come not to me!  
Hundreds, alas! thou’lt claim to-day,  
But leave me living, leave me free,  
Pass me by on thy way!  
’Tis not that I fear thee, not that I fear  
The gathering darkness, the strife,  
But I love to ride free through valley and plains,  
I love the red rush of blood through my veins,  
I love, I love my life!”

But nearer drew, more near, more near,  
The veiled form of Death  
Who cometh all unasked to men,

## DEATH AND THE SOLDIER

With clammy fingers and icy breath;  
And the soldier cried again :

“I never courted thee, Death, as some  
Have recklessly, foolishly done.  
I leave no children, no anxious wife,  
Not even a maid whose cheeks grew pale  
As I rode away in my suit of mail,  
Away from my southern home.  
But think! My manhood is just begun,  
And I love, I love my life!  
I do not need the endless rest  
Which to the old is given.  
I have done nothing to be blest  
By the reward of Heaven.

“Say, Death, art friend or foe?”  
But never answer came.  
He pleaded again, in pain, in woe,  
His grey eyes glowed like flame,  
While the groans of the dying rose and fell  
All over the blood-stained ground.  
He would not hear his own death-knell  
Nor heed his fatal wound.

“I am young, and I felt so strong,  
Waking with the dawn,

## DEATH AND THE SOLDIER

On my lips a careless song,  
In my heart exulting thrills  
As we rode across the hills  
In the early morn.  
None there were to foretell, to warn,  
As we rode along.  
I am young, and the world is wide,  
And I, assured that I should ride  
Onward to glory, ever on  
To fame, until my crown be won,  
My fadeless laurel-wreath!  
Something has told me from my youth  
That I should be leader of men;  
Ay, and I knew it! Not how, or when,  
But I knew that the voice spoke truth  
When it whispered of splendour to be,  
And now thou art waiting, Death,  
Waiting for me!  
Hence! I defy thee! O, bitter, cruel,  
To send such misery.  
To snatch success like a precious jewel  
That should have adorned my brow,  
And to give me instead the narrow grave,  
No one to help, no one to save,  
And the death that is waiting now!"

## DEATH AND THE SOLDIER

But he sudden ceased ; his words so wild,  
So vain, were hushed and still.  
Very peacefully he lay,  
As a little child.  
For the clouds above him grey  
Parted, and there shone a face,  
Stern, and yet it smiled.  
And a voice, as sweet and clear  
As choruses of cherubim  
Said, "O hush! Peace, peace to thee,  
Drawing near Eternity.

"O be silent! What is worth  
Thy lamenting and thy cry?  
Think! What is thy little earth?  
A mere speck in space;  
And thy life is but an hour,  
Fading like a frail flower  
That only blooms to die.  
While the glories thou would'st win  
Are as tinsel and as dross,  
Gaining them is only loss—  
Hearken then to me.  
For the God of Battles wills  
Thou should'st enter in;  
In His Kingdom there is work,

## DEATH AND THE SOLDIER

There is glory for thee, too,  
Only in whate'er we do  
Nothing mean can lurk.  
Come, then, He is calling thee,  
—Not to everlasting rest,  
That for others may be best—  
But that is not for thee.  
So enter with a humble heart  
To Eternity."

Then the clouds which moved apart  
Closed again; the voice was still.  
Silently the soldier lay,  
Life was ebbing fast away,  
But his lips were smiling sweet,  
Though he felt his pulses beat  
Now very fitfully and fast,  
Now laggingly and slow;  
Till he saw, close by his side,  
The form of Death appear at last,  
Silent, mystical, and chill.  
"Come!" it said. He answered low,  
"I am ready now to go."  
So he died.



## Joy Rides High

Joy rides high, O Joy rides high  
On a wingèd horse to the ardent sky,  
Over the hill-tops, up and away  
To the sun's gold heart at the dawn of day,  
To find, held close to his burning breast,  
A rapturous fire that is more than rest.

Joy rides high! When the sun slips past,  
And the low-swung moon, and the stars at last,  
Glowing, quivering, break from the blue  
Wonderful curtain that none sees through,  
Then the winds are loosed, and the clouds race by,  
And free through the firmament Joy rides high!

When Spring is whispering, all astir,  
(O the dear young voice and the joy of her!)  
When the poorest tree has its gift of green,  
And the blood runs swift and the pulse is keen,  
Then clear from the heights rings a glad new cry  
And swift through the heart of us Joy rides high.

## JOY RIDES HIGH

Out! for the morning is bright once more,  
There is life on the hills, in the woods, on the shore;  
The warm waves dance, and we're strong of limb,  
And the wine of life's at the cup's gold brim,  
And we're one with Youth that can never die,  
And Joy rides ever, and Joy rides high!

## My Ship\* at Sunset

*I saw a ship a-sailing,  
A-sailing on the sea,  
And O, it was all laden  
With pretty things for me.*

Far in the West the sunset flung  
Its gaudy banner on the sky,  
A sort of brooding silence hung  
Across the water, and a shy,  
Reluctant breeze went by.

The ship came sailing from the West,  
The sunset's glory over her,  
Gradual and calm she onward prest,  
And scarcely made the water stir,  
So slow her movements were.

I saw the snow of sails that shone,  
I caught the gleam of burnished gold,  
And knew that piled in heaps upon  
The deck, or hidden in the hold,  
Were treasures manifold.

MY SHIP AT SUNSET

I stood and gazed, my heart a-glow,  
For something whispered to my soul,  
"The ship is thine: she finds, I know,  
In thee a haven and a goal,  
Thine while the ages roll."

More near she sailed, with bird-like grace,  
And one was standing at the prow,  
Commanding and serene his face,  
Grave eyes beneath the level brow.  
My heart can see him now.

So soon the soul perceives its own,  
So swift the spirit understands,  
We two were in the world alone,  
And I was hastening down the sands  
With outstretched, straining hands.

With outstretched hands he waited still  
And smiled a greeting, when I heard  
A sudden cry of warning thrill,  
My leaping heart, aroused and stirred,  
Sank like a wounded bird.

And even as she touched the strand  
The ship began to move away,

MY SHIP AT SUNSET

As if some great, relentless hand  
Which nothing had the power to stay  
Drew her across the bay.

And what had been a narrow strip  
Of sea between us, grew again,  
Still wider, bore away my ship,  
Till all the vast dividing main  
Rolled deep between us twain.

But as I saw her drawn away,  
Not guessing why, not knowing how,  
Loud and distinct I heard him say,  
That splendid figure at the prow,  
"I shall return: wait thou."

And so I wait while sunset flames  
And shoots its colours through the sea,  
Till stealing night her season claims,  
And light grows dim, and winds blow free,  
And stars look down on me.

And so I wait through all the days,  
With faith as steadfast as a star,  
And so I wait to-night, and gaze  
Far out beyond the harbour-bar,  
Far out—God knows how far.

## The Conqueror

Keep me sane! Lord, keep me sane,  
Now my overheated brain,  
Flushed with fortunate success,  
Cannot grasp its happiness.  
Do we lose most when we gain?  
Is the struggle and the strain  
All we know of certain joy?  
Are the laurels always vain?  
Is the crown a paltry toy?—  
Now that I at last attain,

Keep me sane, Lord! Keep me sane!  
How my heart, which beat so fast,  
Pulses slowly, danger past.  
How my eyes, which gazed so deep,  
Calmly wake and calmly sleep.  
All the passion, all the fear,  
Hopes and longings disappear.  
Surely this is not the end,  
This, the mountain-top I gain?  
Surely I may still ascend,  
For I perish on the plain!—  
Keep me sane, Lord! Keep me sane!

## Wisdom and Beauty

Beauty wanders debonair

Up the hill and down the hollow,  
Looking backward, to ensnare,  
Crying, "Follow, follow, follow!"

Wisdom with the brow austere,  
Walking slowly and sedately,  
Calls not one to come anear,  
Only beckons, mute and stately.

And they crowd to Beauty's bower,  
Thronging all the open highway,  
While the few, to Wisdom's tower,  
Steal by narrow lane and byway.

Sadly looketh Wisdom down  
On the little group before her;  
Gaily Beauty wears her crown,  
Seeing hundreds that adore her.

And at length must Wisdom ask,  
From her scroll reluctant turning,  
"Beauty, lend to me thy mask,  
For I cannot rule by learning."

## Ode to Joy

Ah! fleeting Joy,  
Thy stay is all too brief, too swift thy flight!  
Thou comest, and thy coming brings the light,  
And even thy least wand's waving can destroy  
The manifold illusions of the night,  
Till we forget the terror and the gloom.  
Thou comest from that far-off Fairyland  
Whose bright enchantments we may never see.  
Something immortal hast thou, and the bloom  
Of youth and poetry;  
Strewing thy gifts with such a lavish hand  
That we are dazzled by the golden shower  
Which falleth far and free.  
The weak youth grows a man in that short hour,  
Unguessing how  
The greybeard turns a boy,  
Such magic wieldest thou,  
O fleeting Joy!

Soft stepping, and thy wand within thy hand,  
And on thy lips a smile,



## ODE TO JOY

Thou comest from that far-off Fairyland  
Whereof we dreamed awhile.  
Parting its curtains with thy wand  
Until they let me through,  
One instant we may gaze beyond  
And find our dreams are true.  
O fabled Fairyland of thine,  
All wonder, all a-glow,  
How close and clear its jewels shine,  
How fair its blossoms grow!  
And under it and over it the winds of heaven go!

Bright-winged thou art, all tipped with gold,  
Bright-winged, and brighter-eyed,  
And those deep eyes a secret hold  
For him who gazes deep within  
And reads the charm they hide.  
Then he forbears to wish for more,  
Then he forgets his life before  
And all the world beside.  
For Life, new Life, must now begin,  
He rises deified.  
The glorious sunlight fills his soul,  
And all about him floats a breeze  
As pure and fresh as that which stole  
Through Eden's clustered trees.

## ODE TO JOY

But those bright wings are poised for flight  
Too suddenly and soon,  
And we are left with straining sight,  
With empty hearts, alone at night  
Beneath the distant moon  
Which seemed within our grasp an hour ago.  
How lonely are we left,  
Forlorn and joy-bereft,  
With faltering feet and slow.  
From their frail setting fall the gems  
That made our glittering diadems  
In that proud day gone by.  
Our hands are filled with faded flowers,  
Our song becomes a sigh.  
Alas for those poor hopes of ours!  
Alas that we must cry,  
"Come back no more to cheat us thus,  
To flatter and decoy,  
But weave thy spells apart from us,  
O fleeting Joy!"

## Castles in the Clouds

I have seen them night by night, in the cloudy sunset skies,

Battlemented palaces, set in clustered trees;  
Dark against the primrose light, one by one I see  
them rise.

Never mortal hand could build cities fair as these.

There are castles grey and old, spirit-haunted, ivy-hung,

Solemn and mysterious with their frowning  
walls;

There are forests dark and cold, towers whose  
ghostly bells are rung,

Curfew bells, by spirit-hands as the twilight falls.

What embodied dreams may throng all the misty  
mountain-ways,

—Distant purple hills—no bird ever flew so far;  
Knights and maids of some old song from the clear-cut  
turrets gaze,

Very fair and pale the maids, brave the gallants  
are.

## CASTLES IN THE CLOUDS

And the soul of old Romance, and the soul of Beauty  
dwells

In the forests, on the hills, and their quiet feet,  
Lightly passing, now advance through the stately  
citadels,

And their tender laughter rings musical and  
sweet.

Rocky pools of lucid green, pools no mortal ever  
knew,

Lie along a curving shore with its hills of sand.  
Out beyond them I have seen where no ripple breaks  
the blue

Of the shallow lake that sleeps very far inland.

Are they fancies in a dream? Only sunset fallacies,  
Just a cloudy tapestry hung before my eyes?  
Very far away they seem, battlemented palaces,  
Frowning walls and clustered trees in the western  
skies.

## When Half-Gods Go, the Gods Arrive

When half-gods go, the gods arrive!  
O it is good to be alive!  
    To feel one's own immortal youth,  
    To catch a ray of living truth  
To see whose distant lamp we strive.

We long to feel and do and know;  
We face the world, our hearts aglow,  
    With leaping pulse and willing hands;  
    The deathless, dauntless soul expands,  
The gods arrive when half-gods go.

No old, unworthy hopes may thrive;  
We shatter all our idols, drive  
    Smooth falsehood flying far and fast;  
    We know our time has come at last—  
When half-gods go, the gods arrive!

## Restore Our Youth, Dear God

Restore our youth, dear God,  
For Age is mean and bare.  
Young hearts are strong to dare,  
And love the paths untrod.  
The feet of Age must plod  
Through ways no longer fair.  
Restore our youth, dear God;  
For Age is mean and bare.  
It seeks beneath the sod  
The rest it longs to share;  
Youth's footsteps tread on air,  
Its feet are lightning-shod.  
Restore our youth, dear God.

## Haunted

She comes when evening shadows fall,  
When Winter winds are swift and chill,  
When snow is heaped against my wall  
And snow lies on my window-sill.

Among the shadows lies her path,  
She glides from out them to the shine  
Of firelight in my lonely hearth,  
And takes the chair that faces mine.

No word she speaks ; no sign she makes ;  
She does not stir from out her place ;  
But there she sits, and never takes  
Her earnest eyes from off my face.

The firelight flickers through the room,  
I feel no warmth from all its glow,  
Nor heed the slowly gathering gloom  
While those grave eyes are gazing so.

HAUNTED

The moments pass, she never stirs,  
The hours drag by, she does not speak;  
But only from those eyes of hers  
The tears fall slowly down her cheek.

And sometimes rising, stern and grand,  
Withal so very silently,  
She lifts a wan, transparent hand,  
And points a finger straight at me.

That finger glows like living coal,  
It burns its way to heart and brain,  
It pierces to my very soul  
Till I am faint and sick with pain.

I will not let her in to-night,  
I lock my door, and bolt it fast,  
While ever dimmer grows the light,  
And ever louder howls the blast.

And yet I know it is in vain,  
That I shall hear, as evermore,  
A rustling at the window-pane,  
A tapping at my bolted door.



HAUNTED

She never speaks ; she sighs at most,  
Yet what she is I fully know,  
The form made visible, the ghost  
Of all my hopes of long ago.

. . . . .

The night is coming on apace,  
And clouds hang dark above the town,  
But clear I see her pallid face,  
With slow tears dropping down and down.

And so she sits and watches me,  
And I may rave, and writhe, and pray.  
No human hand can set me free,  
And God has turned His face away.

## Sandalled Feet

Dawn has sandals made of gold.  
    Merrily, so merrily  
    She passeth from the solitude  
In beauty all untold.  
Cometh, calling all the birds,  
    Cometh, waking all the flowers,  
Speaking to them sweetest words,  
    Sweeter words than ours.  
Bringeth with her tender light,  
    Light that fails not, light that burns not,  
And a mist of foamy white  
    That arises and returns not.  
Bringeth such a gentle breeze  
    That it falters as it tries  
To repeat its harmonies,  
    And as gently dies.  
Then she laughs, and, indiscreet,  
Plucks the sandals from her feet,  
    Tosses them away,  
And a glory fills the air  
When her feet flash white and bare,  
    And that is Day.

SANDALLED FEET

Night has sandals made of fur.  
    Silently, so silently,  
    She passeth in her solitude  
That no one heareth her.  
She is mystic in her power,  
    She may awe, but not alarm,  
Hushing bird and closing flower  
    By a subtle charm.  
She will lure, and yet elude  
    Any mortal who pursues her,  
Mighty in her solitude,  
    Far beyond the one who woos her.  
Be he lover, be he friend,  
    By her starlight, by her moon,  
He must watch her, lest she bend  
    Towards her sandal shoon.  
Be he gallantest of men  
He must hide in terror then,  
    Quail, and hold his breath,  
And his eyes must never meet  
The wondrous whiteness of her feet,  
    For that is Death.

## Hope's a Star

Hope's a star ashine  
Far above my head;  
And I know not whence it came  
With a sparkle and a flame  
And a radiance shed  
Down on me and mine.

Hope's a star divine.  
Though the storm-clouds hide  
All the gracious gleam and glow,  
Yet I grieve not, for I know  
On their other side  
Hope's a star ashine.

## The Mother

She kept her tender watch beside  
The cradle where her baby lay,  
And smiled to see, with loving pride,  
The wayward little curls astray  
In sweet and wilful disarray.  
"How fair, and soft, and fine!" she said,  
And bent and kissed the little head.

What sudden memory makes her start?  
From cheek and lips the colour flies,  
Her hand goes wandering to her heart,  
Above whose quickened beating lies  
A locket, closed to curious eyes,  
But guarding, safe and secret there,  
Another ring of silky hair.

And later, when the firelight smiled  
A welcome to the one who came,  
And kissed his wife, and kissed his child,  
Who woke and clamoured for a game,  
And laughed, and lisped his father's name,  
She turned away, no word she said,  
But forth into the night she fled.

## THE MOTHER

And down the churchyard path she went,  
Where branches bend and grasses wave,  
And weary bodies lie content,  
And neither tears nor pity crave.  
She knelt beside a little grave  
Where, in a dreamless slumber deep,  
Her other baby lay asleep.

She felt afresh the parting pain,  
She heard anew the bell that tolled,  
She longed to warm to life again  
The baby that had grown so cold;  
She pressed her face against the mould.  
"The other takes his place," she said,  
"And I am jealous for my dead!"

## Prisoned Souls

As the silent violin  
    Lieth all inert and dumb,  
    Waiting for the hand to come  
Which shall free the voice within;  
As the brown, encradling earth  
    Holds the seed-souls of the flowers,  
    Waiting for the sun-warmed showers  
Which alone can give them birth;  
So is many a soul to-day  
    Folding all its wonders close,  
Music such as Pan might play,  
    Beauty brighter than a rose.  
But the beauty is concealed,  
    And the music all unheard,  
    Waiting for a look, a word,  
Which shall bid it stand revealed.  
And we know that this is true,  
    Ours may be the hand of fate  
    Which those prisoned souls await  
Ere they burst the barriers through.

## The Little Life

My life's a little thing,  
And aimlessly it goes,  
With nothing of repose,  
With nothing that can sting  
And stab to meaning. Fast  
It flies, and not a deed  
Or word shall any heed  
And point to at the last.

I hear the waves that surge  
And beat on shores not mine.  
I see the light divine  
On mountains that emerge  
From veils of mist and haze.  
My soul may never stray  
Beyond the sheltered bay,  
The valley's certain ways.

The visions and the dreams  
That furnished all my youth  
(More vivid than the Truth,  
And brighter than its gleams)



THE LITTLE LIFE

Have failed me now. Half-blind  
I stumble on, afraid,  
I see them float and fade,  
And leave no shred behind.

Then Truth, less closely veiled  
Than in those days a-glow :  
“*They* fail thee? Nay, not so,  
'Tis thou thyself hast failed!  
The great souls, strong of will,  
They crave and cleave and climb  
Past bounds of space and time.”

. . . . .  
But I am fettered still.

My life's too slight to know  
A deathless love or hate.  
No tragic sorrow's weight  
The scornful gods bestow.  
No cross it has, no crown,  
A small thing, drifting by,  
That should have touched the sky  
And plucked the planets down.

## City of Desire

*"How many miles to Babylon?"*

*"Three score and ten."*

*"Can I be there by candle-light?"*

*"O yes, and back again!"*

*"Then open the gates as high as the sky,  
And let the king and his men pass by!"*

How many miles to Babylon?

Three score and ten.

O long and weary are the miles

That seemed so little then.

The king and his men are old and grey,

And bent with the weight of years,

Their feet are weary of the way,

And their eyes are dim with tears.

And the gates which opened so wide and high

Are barred and bolted tight,

And no one hears our eager cry,

And no one brings a light.

CITY OF DESIRE

Babylon! Babylon! City of Desire,  
Far across the hills we can see thy shining spire ;  
And our hearts are sick with longing for the mystic,  
    distant town,  
But the gates are shut and bolted, and we cannot  
    force them down.  
Our voices fail and falter, singing still the ancient  
    rhyme,  
For the king is old and feeble, and his men are past  
    their prime.

Babylon! Babylon! Long and long ago  
Straying childish feet have stood within thy city  
    walls.  
Our ears have heard thy music, pealing loud or  
    floating low,  
Our eyes have seen the beauty and the splendour of  
    thy halls.  
But the childish feet were restless, and something  
    urged us on,  
We sought again the backward path of three score  
    miles and ten.  
We left thy glory and thy peace, O mystic Babylon,  
And gaily, ere the candle-light, we all came back  
    again.

CITY OF DESIRE

And now we weep for thee, Babylon,  
Now the gates are shut and the light has gone,  
For steep is the road and long the way  
That seemed so short to us yesterday.  
And we cry aloud with a bitter cry,  
"O let the king and his men pass by!  
Would we were now where we wandered then,  
Never more to come back again!"

## Night in the Graveyard

Very peaceful lies the graveyard on the hill,  
Where the trees throw waving shadows on the  
grass,  
And the very silence seems to wait until  
It shall hear a footstep pass.

All in order stand the headstones, all in rows,  
Very solemn, very stately, very white;  
And the grass that presses round them greenly  
grows,  
And the flowers are frail and bright.

Very silent lies the graveyard all the day,  
But at night faint voices tremble into sighs,  
Fainter forms go flitting past as if astray,  
Seeking other forms that rise.

Bent and aged shadows through the darkness creep,  
Vague, elusive, and they whisper as they go,  
"We have lived, we have laboured, and we sleep;  
It is surely better so."

NIGHT IN THE GRAVEYARD

Other younger voices answer, "It is best."

Other younger shadows murmur soft and clear,  
"We have loved, we have suffered, and we rest ;  
It is peaceful waiting here."

Children's voices echo sweetly, children play  
In and out among the headstones, laughing low,  
Pluck the ghostly gleaming roses from their spray,  
Toss the petals to and fro.

And they cry, these shadow-children, in their glee,  
"Tell us not to sleep, our hands together prest,  
Let us play in this our garden wide and free,  
What have we to do with rest?"

But those other older voices rise and swell  
Like the never-ceasing murmur of the sea  
When it sings of all the secrets it could tell  
In its low monotony.

"We have dwelt with pain, have learnt what sorrow  
knows,  
Like children we have cried ourselves to sleep,  
Let us rest where nothing troubles our repose,  
Where the silence broodeth deep."

NIGHT IN THE GRAVEYARD

So the night wears past, and splendidly the morn  
Fills the sky with floods of glory, waves on waves,  
And the little breeze that rises, most forlorn,  
Whispers lonely round the graves.

## The Backward Way

Dear with distance is the dim,  
Faintly-shining track  
Of my childhood's happy days.  
Bright before me wind the ways,  
Yet unknown and all untried,  
Leading o'er the mountain's rim  
To the other side.  
Full of wonder, forth I go,  
Yet with wistful steps and slow,  
Glancing backward, with a sigh  
For familiar joys gone by;  
Seeing, down that distant way,  
Little ghosts of memory stray,  
Waving small, appealing hands,  
Half in protest, half in play;  
Till my heart, which understands,  
Cries "Alack! Alack!  
Mine no more that past which calls."  
And a sadness on me falls. . . .  
Yet would I not go back.



## Dear Land of Mine

Dear land of mine, I will not send  
One envious thought beyond the foam,  
Though travellers to the world's dim end  
Have told of treasures rare and fine.  
They speak of England still as "home."  
It is not mine.

And should I ever sail away  
To other cities, strange and far,  
My restless heart will often stray  
Back homewards, till above me shine  
The bright stars which thy wardens are,  
Dear land of mine.

And English woods may bud and bloom  
In all the glory of their green,  
And they may chide the grief and gloom  
Of sombre gum-trees, row on row,  
Who know not what our forests mean,  
Nor care to know.

DEAR LAND OF MINE

For they have never learnt to ride  
O'er silent plains, 'neath silent sky,  
Have never flung their questions wide  
Within a whispering world of gums,  
And stood, imploring some reply  
Which never comes.

They have not felt, they do not know,  
The beauty of the folded hills.  
They have not seen the rivers flow  
Beside the flats of waving green.  
They have not heard the sigh that thrills  
The oaks between.

These strangers from beyond the sea,  
They love their own gay cities more,  
Nor feel the charm there is for me  
Where Sydney streets go winding down  
To where the waters kiss the shore  
Of Sydney town.

My love is thine. I will not sigh  
For all the splendours over-sea,  
But only pray to live and die,  
Come Winter winds or Summer shine,  
Near to the very heart of thee,  
Dear land of mine.

## A Dead Gum-Tree

He is dead, our noble brother,  
    Spite of all the love we gave him,  
Though we cried to Earth, our mother,  
    She was powerless to save him.  
Death was hard and unrelenting,  
Heeding not our low lamenting.

He is dead! The forest chorus  
    Sounds no more in its completeness,  
Spring itself is saddened for us,  
    Robbed of half its mystic sweetness.  
How he gloried in the Spring,  
With its hopes and blossoming!

Life is fled, and hope departed!  
    Someone, idly roaming, found him,  
Left him doomed and broken-hearted,  
    With the fatal ring around him.  
How he shuddered, moaning, sighing,  
"I am dying—dying—dying!"

A DEAD GUM-TREE

Long ago the moonlight tender,  
Through the quiet forest streaming,  
Bathed his leaves in golden splendour.  
Set them sparkling, trembling, gleaming.  
Coldly now it shines instead  
On his branches, bare and dead.

## The Elusive

I loved you long before we met  
And spoke those first light words of ours  
With deeper meaning underset,  
As love grew strong, and felt his powers.

And having then so little, I  
Set up an image, called it You,  
With *Thus she'd think, and thus reply,*  
*And this she is,* and thought I knew.

I never seek that image now  
Since you have told me you are mine,  
But sometimes still I wonder how  
It fareth in its quiet shrine.

For now that I have more—have much—  
I seem in truth to have you less.  
There's something that avoids my touch,  
There's something I may not possess.

## THE ELUSIVE

I still press forward. You recede.  
I stretch my arms. You melt away.  
And yet I love you deep indeed,  
And yet you love me, so you say.

Then why resist me? Why withhold  
The something that would mean the whole?  
Has love no fire to shame the cold  
That forms in ice round soul and soul?

Here's all of me for all your will.  
Perhaps you take me at a glance,  
But you are closely guarded still,  
Nor even ask deliverance.

With energy that never sleeps,  
With heart refusing to despond,  
I search the depths and scale the steeps,  
And you are ever just beyond!

I'll have you yet, in Time's despite,  
There still remains to you and me  
Eternity the Infinite  
Outstretched before us, vast and free.

## THE ELUSIVE

Perhaps more light will point the way,  
New functions aid, some added sense,  
Desire be stronger for delay,  
And love itself grow more intense.

And I shall press towards my goal,  
Nor rest, nor wait, but still pursue,  
Till clear before me stands the soul  
That I shall recognise as You.

## Magic Memory

Memory transforms the room  
To a casket carven fine,  
Rich in chasing and perfume,  
And the gems that in it shine  
Are from Memory's treasure-mine.

Gliding through the city's throngs,  
Low enchantments she repeats,  
Till the air is full of songs,  
And the grey, unlovely streets  
Crammed with beauties, packed with sweets.



## The Loneliness of God

This crowded world, this life's unresting flight,  
Weighs on my spirit heavily to-night.

The holy temple, where I fain would dwell  
At peace, is thronged with those that buy and sell.

I would seek no man, be myself unsought,  
That none might come between me and my thought,

That none disturb my contemplative soul  
Watching the mystery of life unroll,

Till from its prison flies my spirit free,  
And only Nature should companion me.

Only the quiet sky, all star-bestrew'd,  
And the unfailing joy of solitude;

Only the trees, beneath whose murmuring boughs  
Divinest loneliness and I should house;

THE LONELINESS OF GOD

Only the quiet mountains, still untrod,  
Over whose summits broods the peace of God.

Dearest of all, some small, unheeded isle,  
Where I might live alone a little while,

Learning from Nature's silence what the speech  
Of closest human friends could never teach.

Until in time the clouds should be withdrawn,  
And I should watch the solitary dawn,

And, as the day went down to death, descry,  
Across my spirit as across the sky,

A sudden piercing gleam, a light divine,  
And Truth should turn eternal eyes to mine.

O vanished vision, perilously dear!  
The Voice of God is ringing in my ear:

"I, God of Peace, am also God of Strife;  
I placed thee in the peopled vales of life.

"Not in the life thou dream'st of shalt thou find  
Myself; thou must behold me in mankind.

THE LONELINESS OF GOD

“Nor ask of me, poor seeker, for thine own,  
The attribute which must be mine alone.”

. . . . .

The Voice is still. I hear the rising tide  
Of human voices, not to be denied.

And I, perforce, in meekness turn again  
Back to the crowded, busy world of men,

Back to the limits made by nights and days  
And creeds and customs, and the well-worn ways,

Ways where so many other seekers plod,  
Unworthy of the loneliness of God.

## Intuition

Within your quiet breast serene  
    There beats a heart that longs and thrills,  
Like those volcanic fires unseen  
    Beneath the bosom of the hills.

No faltering word, no blush makes known  
    The traitorous heart that throbs below,  
But by the beating of my own  
    I learn its language, and I know!

## The Mist Maid

Out of fancies is she fashioned,  
Dreams and clouds have served to form her;  
Never kiss was so impassioned  
That could move her, that could warm her.  
If that wistful mouth were kiss'd  
Would it melt away in mist?

Some young willow by the river  
Bends as she does, curving, swaying;  
River-water shadows quiver  
In her changing eyes, betraying  
Every little thought that stirs  
In that virgin heart of hers.

I have wooed her and besought her,  
Still elusive she evades me.  
Can I clasp the running water?  
Snatch the drifting cloud that shades me?  
Tell this child of dew and air  
All a man can feel and dare?

THE MIST MAID

Clay-cold is she? I shall mould her.

There shall be no more resistance.

I shall have her, I shall hold her.

No more doubtings, no more distance.

I shall teach her. She shall learn

How we mortals love and yearn!

## No More

Whene'er I see blue hills, blue sea, blue skies,  
I think, my dear, of you.  
I think of you, my dear, and your blue eyes  
That were so very blue.

They shine no more, and cold and lonely stands  
The churchyard on the hill.  
I think of you and your still, folded hands,  
That were so very still.

## Wanderer's Song

Call us not poor who wander thus,  
Lords over Space and Time,  
Heirs to a kingdom glorious,  
A heritage sublime.

We are tanned with the sun and wind,  
Wet with the rain and dew,  
We have suffered and we have sinned,  
We have been noble too.

Scholar and priest may pass us by,  
Little for them care we,  
We who look to the open sky  
And to the open sea.

We are vagabonds, free and gay,  
Wanderers all from birth,  
Taking the road that winds away  
Over the edge of the earth.



WANDERER'S SONG

Knowing the lure of the distant hills  
On to the furthest spur,  
Loving the song of the wind that thrills  
Into the heart astir.

All of the forest lands are ours,  
All of the swaying trees,  
All of the unsuspected flowers,  
Dearest of all are these.

Sun, and moon, and the stars ashine,  
Surge of the long sea swell,  
All are ours by a right divine.  
Have we not loved them well?

Ours the joy which the gods bestow  
Freely on us alone,  
Deep, deep love for the earth we know,  
And for the earth unknown.

Call us not poor who wander thus,  
Lords over Space and Time,  
Heirs to a kingdom glorious,  
A heritage sublime.

## Dead Grasses

Long days of heat, and then there fell  
Cool, gracious nights of rain,  
And all the thirsty trees grew well,  
And all across the plain  
Where dust and drought had been,  
The grass grew long and green.

The little ghosts of grasses dead  
Went wandering up and down ;  
“Alas!” they said, “Ah, me!” they said,  
“Our blades were burnt and brown  
Long waiting for the rain,  
*We* grow not green again!”

The little ghosts went whispering by.  
The new-grown grass waxed strong,  
And gladly watched the dripping sky,  
And sang its happy song.  
Nor thought of days long sped,  
And grasses brown and dead.

## The Cloud-Eagle

The young moon's sickle holds to-night  
Above the tide's soft flow  
The old moon's silver web, to light  
The darkening space below.

No wind's awake; no tree-top swings.  
How simply dies the day!  
A dark cloud-eagle spreads its wings  
Across the twilit bay.

Above the high Cathedral tower  
It floats, nor passes by,  
Too dark and strange a thing to lower  
In such a tender sky.

And they who kneel awhile below  
To pray, with meek heads bow'd,  
What reck they of the moon's bright bow  
Or of that baleful cloud?

## THE CLOUD-EAGLE

So pure and pale the sky, it seems  
But freshly washed with rain.  
It is a night for happy dreams  
That fade, and form again.

But still with evil menacings,  
Upon the quiet air  
They spread, those cloudy eagle-wings,  
Above the peace and prayer.

## From Out the Past

Dear long-past dreams which set ashine

The many, youthful, hopeful years,

All tender memories which twine

The closer, greener for our tears,

The daisy-chains we children wore,

The strains of far-off melodies,

Beloved faces seen no more,

Thank God that we remember these!

But those same faces racked with pain,

And that black day when first we learned

That fairy magic was in vain,

And all our world was overturned;

The anguished childish tears we shed,

The deeds undone, the vain regret,

The words of love we never said,

Thank God that sometimes we forget!

## In a Green Meadow

To N.D.M.

Green trees over it, green above,  
Green grass hiding its poorest place,  
Like the smile of an endless love  
Playing over an aged face.

We two walked in it, hand in hand,  
We two ran in it, laughed and sighed,  
Laughed our lips at so wide a land,  
Sighed our hearts at a joy so wide.

O, the blue of the circling hills,  
White, white mist like a fairy fleece,  
While the spirit of evening stills  
The silent meadow to deeper peace.

Something into our souls shall pass,  
Something caught from its beauty bright,  
While greenly, greenly over the grass,  
Stole the shadows and slid the light.

IN A GREEN MEADOW

Long years afterward, O, my heart,  
Will its magic have worn away?  
Will its joy with our youth depart?  
Hark, and hear what my soul would say.

Walking close to our sunset skies,  
We two, meeting, shall smiling stand,  
And each shall see, in the other's eyes,  
The fresh green youth of the meadow-land.

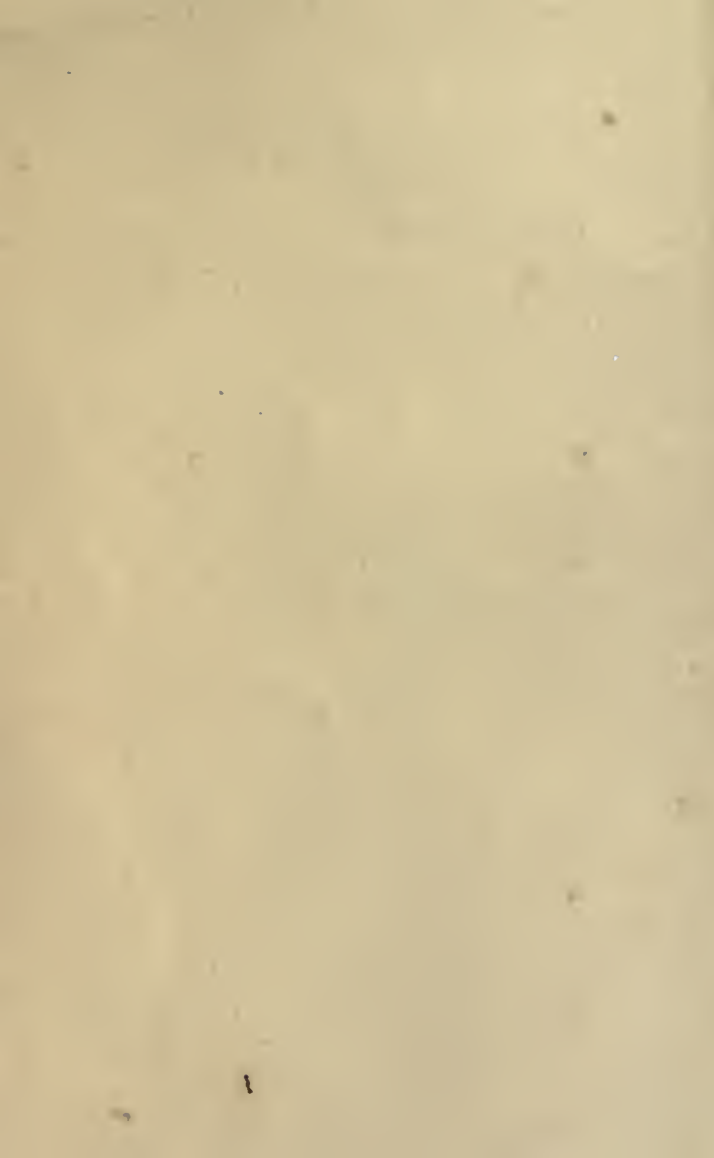




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